

Washington, D.C. – On Wednesday, February 25th, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) welcomed students from Valley Forge Military Academy from his District, who were attending the Close Up Foundation High School Program, to his office to discuss current issues facing our nation, including the state of the economy.

“The education of our youth and their learning are what will give rise to the future economic prospects of our nation,” said Congressman Sestak, a member of the Education and Labor Committee. “I believe that young people can do great things through their determination and hope for a better vision of the future. The great work of the Close Up Foundation in fostering such a dialog of students with elected officials is an important part of this effort.”

As graduating seniors, the Valley Forge Military Academy students expressed their concern for the rising cost of higher education. Over the years, the cost of college education has skyrocketed, while the loan system to help students pay for college has lost its way. Therefore, Congressman Sestak has pushed for a number of reforms, including: increasing the maximum Pell Grant from \$4,050 to \$5,400 over the next five years and expanding eligibility; cutting student loan interest rates from 6.8% to 3.4%; and cleaning up the relationships between student lenders and colleges, while streamlining the Federal Student Financial Aid process.

The Valley Forge Military Academy students were representatives from the “Close Up” Foundation. Since 1971, the foundation has provided the premier Washington civic education experience to almost 700,000 participants. Students meet with Representatives as well as staff members, which demonstrate the accessibility of democratic government while providing a forum for students to express their views on policy issues. “Close Up” programs seek to educate, inspire and empower students by providing them with the skills and experience they need to become active citizens in our democracy.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking*

*former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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